

REMARKS

Claims 1-6, 8, 11-13 and 17-21 are currently pending in the instant application. Claims 1, 8, 19 and 21 are independent. Claims 1, 8 and 19-21 have been amended and claims 22-25 have been cancelled.

Applicants appreciate the Examiner's thorough consideration provided to the present application and the courtesies of the telephonic interview conducted on November 3, 2004 with Applicants' representative concerning the Examiner's request for clarification of the subject matter of paragraphs 0003-0012 of the present application. During the interview, Applicants' representative discussed the request for information described on pages 5-6 of the Final Office Action dated October 19, 2004. Applicants' representative has indicated that Applicants have not disputed the Examiner's position with respect to paragraphs 0003-0010 of the present application. For example, the Examiner has already augmented the record with references that teach or suggest the structural details described in this portion of Applicants' specification. However, with respect to paragraphs 0011-0012 of the application, Applicants have not admitted that this subject matter qualifies as prior art under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as this subject matter has not been described or utilized publicly by "another." In addition, Applicants submit that this

request for information has been obviated and/or rendered moot by Applicants' subsequent amendment of the claims.

Reasons for Entry of Amendment

As discussed in greater detail hereinafter, Applicants respectfully submit that the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) and § 103(a) have been obviated and/or rendered moot. Accordingly, the finality of the Final Office Action mailed on October 19, 2004 should be withdrawn.

In accordance with the requirements of 37 CFR 1.116, Applicants respectfully request entry and consideration of the foregoing amendments as they remove issues for appeal (claims are cancelled and allowable claims are rewritten in independent format) and place the current application in a condition for allowance.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants appreciate the Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter. Specifically, the subject matter of claims 22-25 has been indicated as being allowable if rewritten in independent format. Without conceding the propriety of the Examiner's rejections, but merely to expedite the prosecution of the present application, Applicants have amended claims 1, 8, 19 and 21 to include all of the features of allowable claims 24, 25, 22 and 23, respectively.

Applicants submit that new resulting combinations further described by dependent claims 2-6, 11-13, 17, 18 and 20 are fully supported by the original written description, including, but not limited to FIGs. 4-6(c) and the accompanying description in the specification (paragraphs 0031-0049). Accordingly, claims 1-6, 8, 11-13 and 17-21 should be allowed and the present application should be permitted to issue.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1-6, 8, 11 and 13 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Zimmerman (U.S. Patent No. 1,289,350). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Without conceding the propriety of the Examiner's rejection, but merely to expedite the prosecution of the present application, Applicants have amended claims 1 and 8 to include the allowable features of claims 24 and 25, respectively. Accordingly, these rejections have been obviated and/or rendered moot.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 6, 8 and 11-13 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Zimmerman. Claims 17-18 and 20 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Zimmerman in view of

Maniscalco (U.S. Patent No. 1,979,975). Claims 19 and 21 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Zimmerman in view of Bell, Opitzer, Jenis et al. or La Mori et al.. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

As discussed in greater detail hereinabove, and in light of the foregoing amendments to the claims, Applicants respectfully submit that all of the rejections have been obviated and/or rendered moot. Without conceding the propriety of the Examiner's rejection, but merely to expedite the prosecution of the present application, Applicants have amended claims 1, 8, 19 and 21 to include the allowable features of claims 24, 25, 22 and 23, respectively. Accordingly, these rejections have been obviated and/or rendered moot.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the claim rejection are respectfully requested. Moreover, Applicants respectfully submit that the instant application is in a condition for allowance.

As to the dependent claims, Applicants respectfully submit that these claims are allowable due to their dependence upon an allowable independent claim, as well as for additional limitations provided by these claims.

Amendment dated December 17, 2004
Reply to Office Action of October 19, 2004

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CONCLUSION

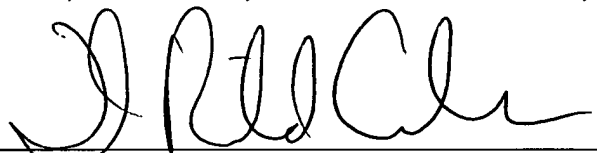
Since the remaining patents cited by the Examiner have not been utilized to reject the claims, but rather to merely show the state-of-the-art, no further comments are necessary with respect thereto.

In the event there are any matters remaining in this application, the Examiner is invited to contact Matthew T. Shanley, Registration No. 47,074 at (703) 205-8000 in the Washington, D.C. area.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

BIRCH, STEWART, KOLASCH & BIRCH, LLP

By 

D. Richard Anderson

Reg. No. 40,439

P. O. Box 747

Falls Church, VA 22040-0747

(703)205-8000


DRA/MTS/mmi